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A DEFENCE OF IDEALISM: SOME QUESTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS.

By May Sinclair. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd. Pp. xxii, 396. Price, 12s. net.

The general argument of this book is somewhat difficult to disentangle, because its logical structure is not very clear or distinct. It has not much in common with those arguments in favor of idealism of which Dr. Bosanquet's Gifford lectures are the most typical example; though its general conclusions are plainly intended to be in harmony with those of Mr. Bradley. This is in fact the most striking thing in it. Miss Sinclair is not the only idealist writer recently who has abandoned the detailed study of the "self-movement" of experience and of the lines of division and therefore of explanation which run through it which (it is generally supposed) is the special characteristic of idealism, in favor of a final appeal to certain high immediate experiences and their very general analysis and defence against criticism. Such a procedure has no doubt certain advantages. It avoids a number of difficulties in reference to the real center of individuality; it permits a constant appeal without much criticism to desires and their satisfaction; and it makes a generous inclusion possible of all sorts of opposing views. I should even be tempted to say that it allows one to maintain one's prejudices intact in one's philosophy; and, most significant of all, that psychical whole which seemed lost may come again by its supposed rights. But all this is at the expense of those elements in the discussion of idealism which are, I should think, its real heart; where its adherents find its greatest values and its opponents think it most of all fails to make good its case. Nor can there be much room for doubt as to the reasons for this tendency, indicating as it does a certain failure of nerve. The formidable advance of realism has induced some of the adherents of idealism to offer a much less bold front. Miss Sinclair sees this clearly enough, and devotes a long and interesting chapter, which I should like to discuss in detail, to a criticism of the New Realism. It purports to show that though such methods are perfectly sound up to a point, they end finally in contradictions which realism cannot solve but in which the idealist merely rejoices. Further, and more important, it cannot establish what conclusions it does reach definitely enough to make appeal to the experiences of the mystic irrelevant or finally untrustworthy.

I agree that against such certainties there is no arguing: but few or no realists would deny it. It hardly requires proof; and though Miss Sinclair raises many interesting points and commits many still more interesting errors, her argument can hardly prove what is obvious. It is against the idealist who storms the strongholds of the Absolute by a frontal attack armed with weapons of logic that realism is most threatening, for it denies the coherence theory of truth. But then this sort of idealist—if he can make good his case—gets precisely what Miss Sinclair misses, the certainty of consolidating securely whatever ground he gains.

Though such a standpoint really rests on a distrust of the intellect, Miss Sinclair maintains that logic is the backbone of philosophy, and the absence of it, together with an appeal to immediate ends and interests, the defect of Pragmatism. Her own logical methods are peculiar, and for an idealist they are loose. Reality is spirit; it is the ultimate reality of things and the ultimate reality of consciousness; it is one and it is psychical, appearing in and informing all things. Spirit may be defined as that "which thinks and wills and energises in one undivided act" (p. 335).

Beginning from the consideration of individuality, Miss Sinclair shows that it does not lie in memory; or in any other arrangement of experiences; nor can it be found in self-feeling; nor in will, though this brings us much nearer; nor in short in anything less than the whole, for the unity of consciousness must be all-inclusive and more than the sum of experiences. In the case of each of these arguments Miss Sinclair develops her own theory on the basis of more or less friendly criticism of the well-known philosophical writings of S. Butler, of the Vitalism of M. Bergson, and of the "Animism" of Dr. MacDougall. In each case also, particularly, I think, in that of Butler, she has a great deal to say which is true and many incidental remarks which are both amusing and valuable. All the same the general basis of her doctrine as to personal identity does not carry much conviction; it would be greatly modified by a real maintenance of the distinction of memory, in the strict sense of recollection, from retentiveness. All that is strictly required for personal identity, so far at least as we can tell by empirical evidence, is the latter, and this is compatible with very great gaps in recollection. In order to account for the facts it is not really neces-

sary to introduce the hypothesis of a self above and independent of particular experiences.

The tentative establishment of a form of animism as against the parallelists which is the conclusion of Dr. MacDougall's *Body and Mind* is however not enough for metaphysics. Its completion demands a unity beyond the unity of consciousness and that of all physical things; and this cannot be an unknowable. And the position of the objective idealist is not any better; for consciousness also falls short of being the whole of the real. The common error of all these views is that of "mistaking one or other set of appearances for ultimate reality, or one part of reality for the whole" (p. 143). We want a term for that which underlies all these and that which has slipped from them. Spirit fulfils this need. It leaves a wide margin for the unknown.

Sufficient has been said to show that the plan of this argument is idealistic without being very exact or strenuous. But the endeavour to show how the highest human experiences lead beyond themselves to the whole is more definitely apparent in the second half of the book, which attempts two things: (1) to defend the position against the attacks of pragmatism and realism; (2) to work out in greater detail by the consideration of higher experiences the nature of Spirit as the absolute and ultimate reality, and to define to some extent its relation to finite experiences. This is possible "provided that Monism lowers its claims to something less than certainty" (p. 272).

The chapter on the New Mysticism seems to me easily the best in the book. It is distinguished by a considerable acquaintance with the literature of mysticism and a great sympathy with it, accompanied by a determination to face the criticisms that may be brought against it. The most significant of all these is that of the Freudians who see in it nothing but a reversion, due to repression, to primitive elemental desires, and the psyche thrown back on the remote stages of its course. Miss Sinclair shows both here and elsewhere a wide knowledge of the psychology of Freud and Jung and—what is much rarer—an appreciation of the philosophical and ethical as distinct from the merely psychological problems which arise out of their work. She fully admits that mysticism has a bad history and that the careers of its remote ancestors will not bear examination; also that the conditions under which much mystical experience occurred were extremely favorable to pathological manifestations. Yet she

argues that there may in some cases be a real sublimation; we may in fact have a new faculty emerging; and if so that it should have a close kinship in some respects with morbidity is no more than we should expect, for the strain on the soul will in fact show itself along the usual lines. This of course is to follow the argument of Mr. F. W. Myers as to the distinction between the developmental and the degenerative, and as a guide the idea seems to me sound in principle. By mysticism at its best Miss Sinclair seems to mean Kabîr and Rabindranath Tagore, and nothing that she has written is more interesting than the contrasts she draws between eastern and western mysticism. The defect of the latter, which it overcomes only very occasionally in the case of great mystics like Lady Julian of Norwich, is its persistent asceticism; it can never reach completeness because the flesh though suppressed will continue to rise up against it. Eastern mysticism is joyful and robust; it gathers difference within itself because "its aim is not to acquire but to realise." Kabîr says: ". . . stay where you are and all things shall come to you in time."

The final chapter contains the conclusions to which the argument points. On the whole the discussion of finite appearances, of evil, and of the way in which the distinctness of the finite selves is maintained in and through their fusion with the infinite self follow pretty familiar lines. That of immortality, as might have been expected from a writer so much influenced by eastern mysticism, does not. Miss Sinclair, if I understand her aright, thinks immortality indicated though not proved by her argument; it helps to make intelligible the evil in the existing universe; it is in accordance with the strong desire of the soul, a desire more strongly felt as its vitality is higher and the content of the self richer; but it is not really personal, for it involves the forgetting of previous experiences as a condition of more perfect consciousness.

Miss Sinclair is anything but a professional philosopher, and in some respects the style of her book benefits from this difference of training. In places however it is allowed to degenerate to a degree of looseness she herself would never permit in a novel. Nevertheless she has succeeded in producing what she evidently set out to produce—a serious philosophical work. Though I disagree with a very great deal of her argument, I regard her book as most interesting and even as important. She tells us that she

hopes to follow it up by another volume dealing with the problems raised by psycho-analysis. Since it is in this region that her work is at its best, we shall anticipate the new book with interest; and shall do so the more if it is to possess what its predecessor lacks—an index and a table of contents.

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THE LIMITS OF PURE DEMOCRACY. By W. H. Mallock. London: Chapman & Hall, Ltd., 1918. Pp. xx, 398. Price, 15s. net.

Mr. Mallock's book is a brilliant study of democracy, very remote from "that sentimentality, mainly of middle-class origin, which suggests impossible estimates of what justice demands for all men." It improves on a second reading, when his full and patient demolition of some lost causes, his somewhat academic discussion of certain problems, take their place in his leisurely and well-rounded argument.

Mr. Mallock, who began to write this book early in 1914, has found himself among the prophets. Begun without any thought of the war, he now finds his thesis of such importance that all practical controversies may be said to turn on it; while Russia, falling into anarchy by practising the principles he criticises so ably, is illustrating it with unexampled abundance. The book is in part a praise of oligarchy, in part a criticism of certain crude ideals of democracy, many of which had already become discredited. It rounds off Mr. Mallock's argument, however, to shatter into fragments anew Rousseau's famous phrase and the economics of Marx. Pure democracy is restricted to primitive communities or to some settlements kept together by the bond of religion. But in some few communities, such as a large modern state, he has no difficulty in showing that such phrases as the general will are without meaning in respect to the composite and complex questions forming the bulk of the matter of politics, though the general will can be expressed with regard to such questions as the necessity for the preservation of order, or the declaration of war against Germany. Indeed, in problems such as the best form of anti-aircraft defence, or the adoption of protection, the will of the many is not sufficiently enlightened, and needs the lights of the few. Mr. Mallock's conclusion is that democracy only realises itself through oligarchy, which